

REMARKS

The Advisory Action mailed March 16, 2004 has been received and the Examiner's comments carefully reviewed. The amendments presented in the Response dated February 27, 2004 were not entered. Accordingly, the present claim amendments correspond to amendments made to the claims as presented in the previous Response dated December 9, 2003.

Claims 1-9, 21, 22, 38, 39 and 52 have been allowed. Applicants thank the Examiner for this notification. Claims 19, 25, 27, 28 and 46 have been amended. Claim 53 has been added. No new subject matter has been added. Claims 17, 18, 24, 29-33, 37, 40-45, and 47-51 have been cancelled. Claims 1-9, 19, 21, 22, 25, 27, 28, 38, 39, 46, 52, and 53 are currently pending. Applicants respectfully submit that the pending claims are in condition for allowance.

Allowable Subject Matter

Claims 1-9, 21, 22, 38, 39 and 52 are allowed. The Examiner objected to claims 18 and 47, but indicated that claims 18 and 47 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form incorporating all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Applicants thank the Examiner for this notification. Claims 18 and 47 have been cancelled.

Claim 53 has been added. Claim 53 incorporates the subject matter of objected-to claim 47 and base claim 24. Applicants respectfully submit that claim 53 is in condition for allowance.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §102

The Examiner rejected claims 17, 19, 40 and 46 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Anderson (U.S. Patent 4,995,383). The Examiner also rejected claims 24, 25, 27-33, 37, 41-45 and 48-51 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by Raunig (U.S. Patent 5,817,039). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection, however, Applicants have cancelled claims 17, 24, 29-33, 37, 40-45 and 48-51, and amended claims 19, 25, 27, 28, and 46 to advance this application to allowance.

A. Claims 19 and 46

Claims 19 and 46 have been amended to depend upon allowed claim 52. Applicants respectfully submit that claims 19 and 46 are in condition for allowance.

B. Claims 25, 27, and 28

Claims 25, 27, and 28 have been amended to depend upon claim 53. Claim 53 includes the subject matter of objected-to claim 47 and base claim 24. Applicants respectfully submit that claims 25, 27, and 28 are in condition for allowance.

SUMMARY

It is respectfully submitted that each of the presently pending claims (claims 1-9, 19, 21, 22, 25, 27, 28, 38, 39, 46, 52, and 53) is in condition for allowance and notification to that effect is requested. The Examiner is invited to contact Applicants' representative at the below-listed telephone number if it is believed that prosecution of this application may be assisted thereby.

Although certain arguments regarding patentability are set forth herein, there may be other arguments and reasons why the claimed invention is patentably distinct. Applicants reserve the right to raise these arguments in the future.

Respectfully submitted,



MERCHANT & GOULD P.C.
P.O. Box 2903
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55402-0903
(612) 332-5300

Date: April 6, 2004


Karen A. Fitzsimmons
Reg. No. 50,470
KAF:cjm